

tives. Our responsibility is to provide patients with health care and to act as their advocate in time of conflict with institutions and agencies that threaten the quality of the health care we provide. This responsibility should not be dependent on any expected financial gain. It is a hallowed tradition that is essential to our patients' well-being. It is the reason for our existence. It is the "soul" of medicine, and if the "soul" is changed, as Dr Auerback suggests, it will be our patients, not ourselves, who will suffer the greatest loss.

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Overcoming Managed Care Blues

YES, AS SUGGESTED IN Marvin Auerback's lucid essay, managed care does threaten to harm the soul of medicine and blight our spirits . . . but only if we let it. As we adapt to monopolistic, Big Brother medicine, my antidote for our melancholy is to look for honest pleasures in our lives and build on them. Our cardinal pleasure is the one that we should cultivate the most, that which comes from

working through clinical problems and making the best decisions for our patients. This well will never run dry. In parallel, we can seek out and do new and different things in our practices. Life is change; change excites. Take a course in echocardiography or come to grips with likelihood ratios and the probability game.

We have come to depend too much on reports about our patients gathered by others. We cannot see our patients for the data. The remedy is to do more things that are concrete, immediate, and palpable—touch, take our patients' blood pressure measurements ourselves, look at x-ray films ourselves. This can give us a sense of command, understanding, and closeness to a patient that can be gained in no other way.

We are too insular. There is much to gain by going outside medicine and viewing the world through the spectacles of others. Regular participation in nonmedical discussion groups can be salutary for physicians. By going outside, we get inside. And we have our families, hobbies, and sports—tennis, anyone?

Cheer up, comrades, there are shoals ahead, but our lives and managed care do not have to be unmanageable.

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